

TITLE V/LEC

LEARNING ENHANCEMENT
CENTER

Luminaria

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The Title V/LEC Contributes to Higher Retention

By Dr. Larry Lutsky, Research
Analyst

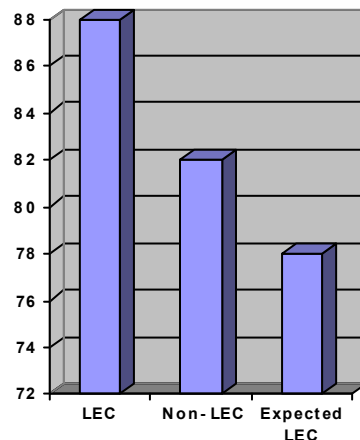
The Learning Enhancement Center has been a valuable resource for the students at Metropolitan College since it opened its doors in January of 2006. Now enough data have been collected to look at some of the outcomes for students who received services from the Center and to compare these outcomes to a cohort of students who have not received these services. We looked at 99 students who were tutored at the Center in the fall of 2006 and compared their outcomes to the 911 students who did not receive tutoring in that semester. We followed those students to the spring 2007 semester and looked at three outcomes: Retention, GPA, and credits earned. We were most interested in retention, as a high proportion of our students are from purposes I and

II have the highest risk of dropping out, and early intervention is considered crucial in keeping these students in school. We were pleased to find that not only did the LEC students have better outcomes on all three measures, but the biggest improvement was in retention.

We defined retention as the percent of all fall 2006 students who either enrolled in the spring 2007 semester or graduated. Using that definition, 88% of LEC students were retained, compared to 82% of non-LEC students. Furthermore, when adjustments were made for the higher proportion purpose I and II students in the LEC, the expected retention for LEC students was 78%, a rate that was surpassed by 10%.

Of course there are many explanations for these differences.

Undoubtedly, students who came to the LEC had a greater motivation to succeed and that may have been a factor in their success. However, we believe the services they received here were also critical to their success. We sought out students to help us understand the story behind these statistics.



(Continued on page 3)



Message From The Interim LEC Director, Dr. Jaya Kannan

This 2007 Fall term, the Title V/LEC project is embarking on the third year with enthusiasm and a sense of accomplishment having contributed to improving student retention, helped students to improve their writing and math and collaborated with faculty members interested in developing teaching practices suitable for a technology-rich classroom.

New initiatives in the Fall 2007

term have included a) conducting a three part writing workshop for MPA students, b) training a small group of faculty members in the use of Smartboard to enhance teaching and learning, and c) setting up a new computer lab equipped with Smartboard technology in collaboration with the Title V Co-op grant.

Also, the Annual Performance Report (for the period of Oct 2006-Sep 2007) was submitted to the Title V program at the U.S.

Department of Education.

Primarily, during the transition process in the leadership at the LEC, we are focused as a team on being dedicated to supporting student learning outside the classroom. In moving forward, the LEC is keen to plan strategies to "institutionalize" the project so that this support service for teaching and student learning can continue even after the term of the Title V funding ends within three years.

Math Corner

By Barrington Scott, Math Specialist

In the last issue of Luminaria, a signed number question was posted where readers were asked to apply the order of operation to solve it. Well, the answer to that question was -31. Congratulations to all those who answered the question correctly.

For this issue, we are putting forth a problem of measuring probabilities.

Audrey Cohen High School has a population of 2,000 stu-

dents, and 1 out of every 8 students is there on scholarship. Of the students that are on scholarship, half are enrolled in the specialized math and science program. If you select a student at random in the hall ways, what is the probability that the student will be both on scholarship, and in the specialized math and science program?

Bonus question: How many students are there in total that are both on scholarship and in the specialized math and sci-

ence program?

Please bring your solution showing your work to the LEC in room 1278. Students who solve the problem and bonus question correctly will be entered in a raffle, with the winner receiving a 2gb flash drive.



Study Confirms the TitleV/LEC Serves A Wide Cross-Section of the College

"Students come to us from every degree program and curriculum at the college."



By Dr. Larry Lutsky, Research Analyst

The Learning Enhancement Center (LEC) is a resource that is available to all students at MCNY. In order to confirm that we were meeting our mission, a study was conducted to determine the background of students served by the Title V/LEC in 2006, our first year of operation. Who comes to the Title V/LEC? Students come to us from every degree program and

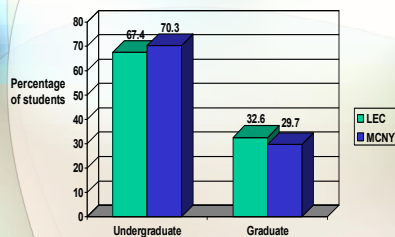
curriculum at the college. It may surprise you to learn that 33% of our students are in graduate programs which is slightly higher than the percent of graduate students at the college overall. In particular, MBA General Management students represented 6.3% of the students we served last year which is higher than their percent of MCNY Students (3.9%).

Lachaela Wells, a Purpose I MBA student in the Media Management program, came to the LEC looking for a resource list of affordable tutors after seeking a tutor on Craigslist. She was surprised to find that the LEC provided the tutoring that she needed free of charge. After working with Math Specialist Barrington Scott the first day, she said she "was more

interactive in class, and taking more of the initiative to ask questions. I didn't know this service was available, and I will definitely continue visiting." She concluded, "I am surprised that more students aren't there. I have been telling people about how helpful Barrington is, but a lot of people are timid about seeking help."

Students served by the LEC came for an average of 4.2 sessions. While most came for either one (38%) or two (16%) sessions, many students come in for a substantial number. We've had students come in for as many as 41 sessions overall, and 11% have come in for 10 or more sessions within one term. Whether you just need help with a CA or have longer term needs, the LEC is here to help!

2006: Percentage of LEC participants compared to total MCNY students by program



Plagiarism: What It Means and How to Prevent It



By Rochelle Spencer, Writing Specialist

Dear Students:

It starts off innocently enough. It's 5:00 a.m., and you have a paper due the next day. You're tired; you can't concentrate, and—gasp—you're out of coffee! You quickly decide to browse the Internet. Once online, you find an interesting website about your topic, and so you change a few words and call the paper your own. A week later, your professor hands you your paper. Instead of the bright, sparkling "A," you'd been expecting, you see an angry, red "F", indicating that is an act of plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is often a result of disorganization and poor planning. Still, many writers can avoid plagiarism by first knowing what it is. Plagiarism occurs not only when writers copy a source word for word, but also when writers fail to give accurate or sufficient information as to where they found a source or when a paraphrase (information taken from another source but written in the writer's own words) seems too close to the original.

By following these four steps, writers can seriously reduce their chances of plagiarizing.

1) Refer to your stylebook and become familiar with it before you write your paper.

"Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is often a result of disorganization and poor planning."

Let's face it: writing a paper can be stressful. But one way to reduce that stress is by first becoming familiar with some of the mechanics of citation. So, on the subway or while you're waiting for the doctor, take some time to peruse a stylebook. As you flip through the pages, pay attention to how your paper should be formatted and the ways that in-text citations

differ from the way that sources are listed on a reference page. Keep in mind that at this time, you don't have to understand everything about citing a source—you can always look up specific details later. Still, by understanding the basic elements of a research paper, you will be more comfortable once you have to write your own paper.

2) Designate a place to write your paper and keep hard copies of your sources in that area.

Several reference books advise that writers keep copies of index cards on which they write information about their source.

While this is a good idea, many writers also find that it helps to have one specific place to store library books and hard copies of electronic sources.

Knowing that all of your sources are in a specific place can reduce stress and confusion—especially when you need to locate a source's author at the eleventh hour.

3) Have someone familiar with your writing style read your paper.

Sometimes, when we've been actively reading and researching a topic, the style and tone of another writer can slip into our subconscious. For that reason, it can be quite helpful to have someone read your paper to make sure that you haven't too closely mimicked another writer's "voice."

4) Double-check statistics.

Keep in mind that any information that isn't "common knowledge" (knowledge understood and accepted by everyone in your field) should be cited. Let's say, for instance, that in your paper you write "3 out of 4 people wear brown shoes." How did you know this information? Did you stand on a street corner and count the number of people wearing brown shoes? No. Chances are you found this information in a website, book, or magazine and there needs to be a citation such as "according the USA Shoe Council 2006 annual report [...]". Thus, stating very specific information, such as statistics, without citation is a sure giveaway of plagiarism.

(Continued from page 1)

Janice Jones, a Purpose 1 student working on her MS in Education, says that the LEC kept her from dropping out of school. "I wouldn't be in school today without the LEC tutors' encouragement and advice."

Arlene Jones, a Purpose 8 student who visited the LEC regularly this semester, believes that the LEC was crucial to her success. This is what she wants to tell other MCNY students: "I would really encourage students to check out the Learning Enhancement Center because the tutors make you feel at ease and comfortable...The LEC allows students to learn and work at their own pace!"

Featured Writing Student: Randy Destin



Randy Destin, Featured Writing Student

By Yasmine Alwan, Writing Specialist

Over last two semesters, Randy Destin has come in to the LEC for writing and math tutoring, showing triumphant progress in his essay writing and his understanding of how words work together. It's been a great pleasure to see his mind work through his relationship to his writing. He would often arrive to sessions brimming with questions about verbs, prepositions and phrases before he even sat down.

Things did not start easily for Randy. During his first semester at the LEC, he accidentally got two unexcused absences,

but he returned the next semester doubly determined. His investment has certainly paid off. This process has taught him a lot he says, rattling off comments about his learning that were both thoughtful and profound. It has taught him to be open to frustration and challenge, to be consistent, to be composed under stress and challenge himself. "You've got to be able to be uncomfortable," he said wisely, adding, "Sometimes we have a concept of ourselves that is more limited than what other people see in us." His boss has said, "I don't even have to check your writing because you know your grammar," which is most certainly a delightful thing to

hear after a long time of struggle. Randy says that, after tutoring, his professors praise his writing and his grades have risen by two letter grades.

Randy has been in the human service field for ten years, particularly as a substance abuse counselor, working with many populations dealing with mental illness, homelessness and HIV-related issues. He plans to graduate with a Bachelor's in BPS in August and enter nursing school in the fall to become a Nurse Practitioner. He advises other students, "If you're having problems, don't be shy. Attend the Learning Enhancement Center."

Featured Math Student: Norman Caldwell



Norman Caldwell, Featured Math Student

By Lisa Bauer, Math Specialist

Norman Caldwell has been coming to the Learning Enhancement Center to work with a math specialist since he was in Purpose II. During that time, he has impressed the LEC tutors with his reflective insights and eagerness to apply what he has learned to all areas of his thinking and life.

Norman has focused on understanding the concepts of mathematics, and not just the mechanics of problem solving.

Norman is proud that he has grown more knowledgeable

about mathematics, and he believes that his new understanding is partly a result of good time management skills. "Other students can benefit from being diligent in keeping appointments," Norman says. "Visiting the LEC has helped me stay on track and organized."

Norman's steady—and significant—progress is indeed inspiring. "I started with little knowledge of math concepts, and now I feel I have greatly improved in this area," Norman says of his growing confi-

dence and abilities. "I used to believe math was unachievable; now I see math as a challenge with positive results," he adds.

Norman's learning goal this semester was to "understand statistics on a level in which it can be applied to the professional world." When asked, Norman said he feels he has made great progress towards reaching that goal, specifically in understanding the reasoning behind studying statistics in human services.

Developing an Inner Conversation While Reading



By Yasmine Alwan

People often assume, quite mistakenly, that good readers are fast readers who quickly comprehend content. In fact, most academics read, ponder, and reread, allowing themselves to be confused, ask questions and establish connections with other texts and their own experience. Deep understanding does not arrive instantly. Reading is, after all, thinking, and at its best, a conversation. Using Bean (2001) and Harvey and Goudvis (2007), I will detail some common challenges and tips to help make your reading more active.

Some common challenges:

1. Many readers have a difficult time

understanding what the author is trying to prove (argue).

2. Readers don't always see themselves as "in conversation" with the author.

3. When encountering something unfamiliar or difficult, readers will often forge ahead in their reading in the hope that it will "get explained." Too often though, lack of understanding will make the next section more difficult to fully process and the challenge becomes compounded.

Creating an internal conversation as you read can be very helpful. Here are a few tips to help this going:

1. Look at a text in terms of how it is trying to change your point of view, even if this is very subtle.

2. Look for what you actively believe and do not believe.

3. Practice stop, think, respond. A little pause to sense your thinking can open an entire sequence of reactions, critiques, connections that you were too busy reading to

catch.

4. Use post-it notes as you read to jot down these responses, connections or questions. You may be surprised; a small irrelevant thought can turn into a very important main idea.

5. Have a question in mind as you read. This can help focus your responses.

6. Make comparisons--between your ideas and the author's or between different authors. These can be beginning points for evaluation.

7. Look for not only what the author states but also what she/he implies (inferences).

Try these out and see how it goes. Stop in and let us know.

Bean, J. (2001). *Engaging ideas*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Harvey, S. & Goudvis, A. (2007). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension for understanding and engagement*. Portland: Stenhouse.

"Deep understanding does not arrive instantly. Reading is, after all, thinking, and at its best, a conversation."

Introduction To Ryan Lunenfeld, Our New Educational Technology Specialist



Ryan Lunenfeld, our Education Technologist, is our newest addition to the Learning Enhancement Center. He comes to us from The Cooper Union with a Masters in Library Science from the Palmer School of Information Science. He is good at problem solving,

and enjoys working with faculty members one on one, whether it is developing blackboard board courses or assisting in learning the Smartboard. Feel free to contact him for any questions. RLunenfeld@mcny.edu

A note of thanks to the Outgoing Director, Mr. Bill Bird-Forteza

In his short stint of just over a year at MCNY, Mr. Bill Bird Forteza in his role as the Director of the Title V, LEC built a strong foundation to map a clear plan and achieve the goal of effectively providing administrative and academic support services for teaching and learning within the institution. In doing so, he has left an indelible mark on the efficient running of the Center. Taking on the helm while the LEC was in its embryonic stage, he developed the programs through his strong leadership by working on the financial, administrative, policy making and academic matters at the Center. The hallmark of his leadership was his innate ability to create an atmosphere of support and trust within the department that motivated its members to do their best within a collaborative work environment.

Title V/LEC

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Fallacies of Inferring Causation



By Lisa Bauer, Math Specialist

In 1981 a pregnant woman a little past her due date ordered a pizza at a restaurant. As a joke, she asked that the pizza be topped with items to help her go into labor quickly. She went into labor that night. It was concluded, and widely believed, that consuming a combination of pizza toppings leads to a chemical reaction that induces labor.

This is a myth, and one that appears to draw a logical conclusion. More specifically, this is a logical fallacy called post hoc ergo propter hoc ("after this, therefore because of this"). This is an error in reasoning in which a sequence of events (A precedes B) leads to the incorrect assertion that the first event caused the

second event (A caused B).

This scenario can be easily explained, however. Statistically, most women have their babies two weeks before or after their due date. Women who are a few days past their stated due date have a high likelihood of labor each day, and the further they are past the due date, the higher the probability that labor will occur. If they go into labor after eating a specific type of pizza, it was probably the case that they would have gone into labor at that time anyway, and the preceding pizza incident was just a coincidence rather than the cause.

In order to demonstrate cause, you would have to have a controlled condition. Without such control, a sequence of events could just as easily be attributed to some other causal, underlying factor (in this case, the fact that she was pregnant and past her due date was the greatest probable cause for her delivery rather than the pizza). Sometimes, cause can be affected by a confound: an extraneous variable that could be a contributing factor to the observed outcome. A

controlled study limits the effect of confounds because subjects are matched in every other way except the introduction of the independent (causal) variable, and group selection is completely randomized to avoid uneven influence over the results. Causation is still difficult to conclude, even under the most rigorous of research conditions, which should be an added indication as to why causation cannot be so easily determined from observation of a sequence of events.

It is a typical flaw in reasoning to believe there is cause, when really there is only a sequence where preceding outcomes may or may not be dependent on the preceding events. More and more cause/effect myths are floating about the internet, each possessing typical hallmarks of appearing scientific. Without possessing the skills of good reasoning, you are in danger of incorrectly accepting bad information disguised in a lab coat.